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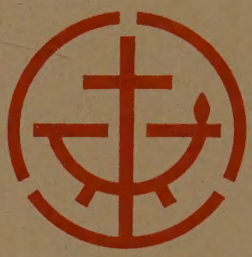

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THE OLD PARISH CHURCHES OF VIRGINIA

A PICTORIAL-HISTORIC EXHIBITION
OF PHOTOGRAPHS IN COLORS
LENT TO THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
BY
FRANCIS MARION WIGMORE

UNITED STATES
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON : 1929

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Theological Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

PREFACE

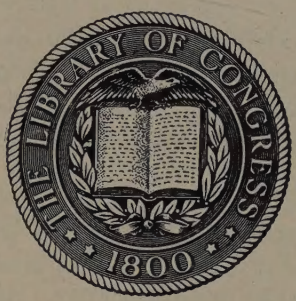
The efforts of any generation interested in architecture are divided between those who are designing new structures fitted to a present need, and those who are concerned with the conservation of edifices of the past which, though planned with reference to needs more modest and more primitive, still have a lesson for us in their embodiment of a grace which is permanent.

Among these latter are certain of the early churches of Virginia. And Mr. Wigmore, with an enthusiasm which counted no cost of his own time, nor outlay upon the necessary apparatus and auxiliary service, has gathered these faithful representatives of them, as they now stand and impress the beholder.

His purpose is not only to enable the impression to reach those who can not take it direct, but also to arouse an interest in the whole group and direct attention to the need of effort for its further preservation, since many of the buildings are in peril of decay. It is a laudable and public-spirited purpose, which should have every sympathy and encouragement. And not merely for this reason, but because the views he has secured are so charming and the accompanying explanations so informing, the Library has welcomed the opportunity to exhibit them.

HERBERT PUTNAM,
Librarian.

MAY 1, 1929.


THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
1800

OLD POHICK CHURCH
In 1773

PROLOGUE

In the Book of Proverbs we find this wise recommendation: "Remove not the ancient landmark which thy fathers have set." Elsewhere, we find the word "Inspiration" defined as: "An awakening or creation of thought or purpose by some specific external influence."

In the case of the author of this pictorial-historic exhibition of the Old Parish Churches of Virginia, the specific external influence was undoubtedly old Pohick Church, the parish church of Truro Parish and the family church of the great George Washington and his neighbors. It was the author's privilege to be actively and intimately associated with the problems of this old landmark and heritage of latter colonial days, and the realization was borne in upon him that a number of the other old churches were still battling against time and the elements—a losing fight in many cases.

Thus was fused a desire to aid them to win this battle, and to assist in putting them in the way of perpetuating their existence down through the generations of the present and the future—else *be this not done,* they *must* succumb and be added to the long list of tragedies marking the passing of many of their sister churches and of the homes and court-houses and other buildings of colonial times, now but a memory or a dishevelled pile of débris. Many of the old churches are now utterly gone and but a comparative few remain—these *should be,* and *they are,* an *inspiration* to us all, for, enfolded in the history of each and every one is a part of the story of the birth of our Nation, and each church that now remains carries its own chapter of human struggle, of pathos, of humor, and of tragedy.

[1] Well might Bishop Meade's words be its epitaph: "A few broken bricks and a little elevation made by the mouldered ruins are all now left to say there once stood a church of the living God."

The desolate remnants of
OLD POPE'S CREEK CHURCH
Near Wakefield, Washington's Birthplace

Again, the good Bishop has said: "It was near to this church that General Washington was born. It was in this that he was baptized. Here it was that he received those early impressions of religion which, instead of being effaced by age, seemed to grow with his growth and strengthen with his strength."

PROLOGUE

A devout celebration of the Lords Supper, at Morris Town, New Jersey, during the war for independence

As we now visit each church, in person, or by this pictorial journey, we feel that inexplicable sense of contact with the past; and the more so if the past is faithfully portrayed in form and surroundings. These churches need help for the restorations of the parts which have succumbed to the injuries of time—restorations which should be made with fidelity and exceeding care. They need help to adjust themselves to modern times, without one whit destroying their original look. They should breathe upon us the spirit of the past and be seen as our forefathers saw them—as nearly as may be. It is the author's hope that through this picturing of the old churches there may grow in the homes of our people the thoughts that will generate help to preserve the ancient landmarks!

FRANCIS MARION WIGMORE.

MAY 1, 1929.

~ Old Bruton Parish Church, Williamsburg, Virginia, and a Sunday gathering in Colonial times. This church was completed in 1715.

INTRODUCTORY

A collection of photographs of the Old Parish Churches in Virginia, built before the Revolution and still remaining

The collection was prepared and historically annotated by Francis Marion Wigmore, under whose direction each detail of the work was carried out. The author gratefully acknowledges the untiring aid of Roland Clifton Barrett, in the making of the photographs, which had sometimes to be done under very trying conditions; of William Oscar Hazard, whose art in depicting the exquisite colors of nature and of the churches speaks for itself; of Charles Albert Weckerly, whose painstaking penmanship in each and every letter of the "legends" savors of the engraver's art.

Repeated visits to each shrine were necessary, not only for a truthful portrayal, but for that quiet communion with the past of each church and its surroundings, whereby alone the story can be recreated.

The photographs are colored in oils with fidelity to the scene as it now exists, the artist being guided in his color tones of each church by that only truthful and eternal inspiration, the original itself; and by a love for the task.

A chart showing the geographic position of each old church has been prepared by the author, and this will aid in visualizing its history and its whereabouts.

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The colored photographs of the exhibition are arranged according to the geographic position of each church, from south to north.

THE
OLD PARISH CHURCHES
OF VIRGINIA

This melancholy but stirring remnant of its time has stood near 300 years. At first surrounded by the palisading life of the colonists, later deserted and apparently now to the requiem murmured by the ever-moving waters of the James...for the souls of those who lost their lives in the bitter struggles of pioneer life.

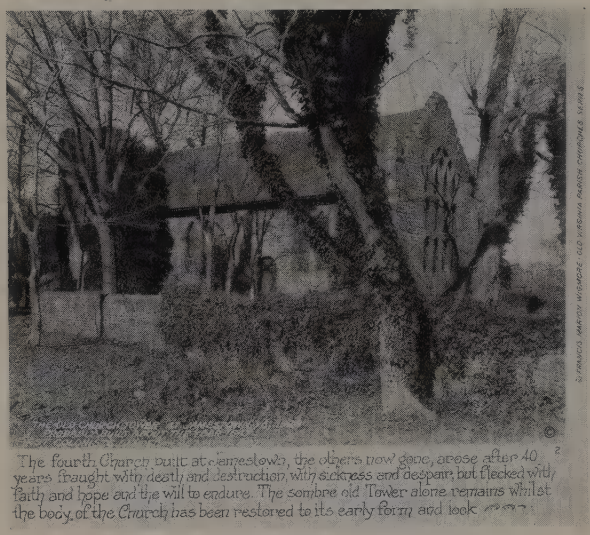
THE OLD CHURCH TOWER

At Jamestown, Virginia, 1928
Probably built about the year 1647. First colonists landed here May 14, 1607

We are told, in quaint phraseology, that the first place of worship of the settlers was fashioned with an awning hung to three or four trees, to shadow them from the sun; and the seats were of unhewed trees, till they cut planks; whilst the pulpit was a bar of wood nailed to two neighboring trees; and in foul weather they shifted into an old rotten tent, for they had few better. Next came the first actual church edifice of the Church of England in America, described as " a homely thing like a barn, set up on cratchets, covered with rafts, sedge, and earth."

The enervating season of August and September, 1607, was soon upon these unacclimated and discouraged men and two-thirds lost their lives within three months. Out of their scarcity, two gallons of wine were reserved for the communion table. The embryo settlement was now consumed by a devastating fire. A second church was built, probably on the same site.

Abandonment of the settlement was attempted in 1610; then came Lord de La Warr, who took much pains to repair the church, and the Lord Governor and the Captain General caused it to be kept sweet and trimmed up with divers flowers. In this second church John Rolfe and Pocahontas were married in 1614. No vestige of it has been, or probably ever will be, found, for the greater part of the site of the triangular stockade, within which these first two churches were situated, has been washed away by the clutching of the waters of the mighty James River.


The fourth Church built at Jamestown, the others now gone, arose after 40
years fraught with death and destruction, with sickness and despair, but flecked with
faith and hope and the will to endure. The sombre old Tower alone remains whilst
the body of the Church has been restored to its early form and look

THE OLD CHURCH TOWER

At Jamestown, Virginia, 1928
Probably built about the year 1647. First colonists landed here May 14, 1607

No eye can look upon, nor can the mind contemplate the Old Church Tower to-day, without turning in thought to the beginnings of the "great adventure." Encompassed only by the surroundings that God created, the spirit is subdued and marvels at the story.

By 1617 the second church (which had been within the stockade) was again in ruins and a storehouse was used for Divine service. At about this period the third church was built, but this time outside the old triangular stockade. It probably was of timber, but set on a light foundation of masonry. Within this little building the first representative body of English lawmakers to assemble in America met together in July, 1619. How long this third church was used is not known, but a new one, called the fourth church, is believed to have been completed about 1647.

The Old Tower probably was a part of this fourth church, which, in turn, was burned in 1676, with the rest of Jamestown, by Nathaniel Bacon and his men. It is likely that only the Tower and walls then survived. Presumably these ruins were rehabilitated during the partial rebuilding of Jamestown between 1676 and 1686.

Thus repaired, it has been called the fifth church and was apparently used until near the year 1800. About this time the walls fell, still leaving, however, the Old Tower ruins from 1647. Now, again, has the body of the church been restored to its early form.

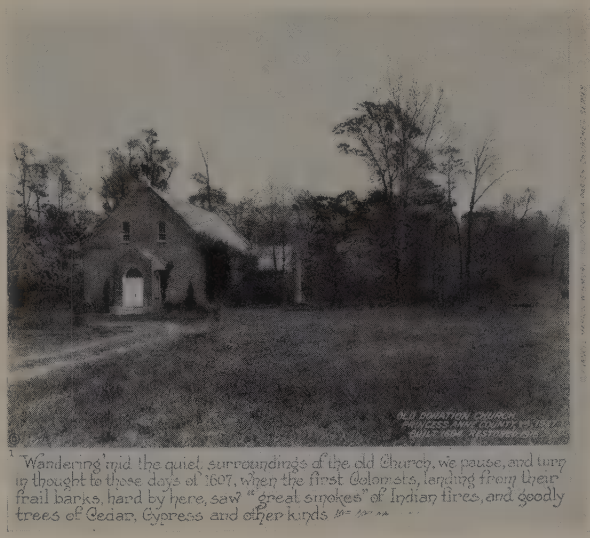
THE OLD BRICK CHURCH
ISLE OF WIGHT CO.
BUILT 1632
5 Builded brick by brick, in a glorious setting of primeval foliage, its wilderness architect wrought with inspiration and power and left to this new country a spiritual treasure, dedicated and hallowed by the sufferings of the colonists

OLD ST. LUKE'S CHURCH

Near Smithfield, in Isle of Wight County, Virginia, 1927
Built 1632

Let us pause a moment and meditate upon the Old Brick Church, as it was called, in order to realize that this is the oldest building now standing in America, which was constructed by Englishmen—a heritage which any national government might well surround with every bulwark of protective care and enshrine amongst its priceless heirlooms. Left only to the kindly help of the few who could and would cherish it, it has miraculously survived. Some of its earliest records were lost by the ravaging raids of cruel Tarleton and his Legionnaires during the Revolution, but the church itself, with its castlelike walls and tower, stands firm; visible historian of invisible centuries!

Pushing their way up the James and into the Indian-pathed forests, it was builded by the colonists only twenty-five years after the settlement at Jamestown, and lies now in Isle of Wight County, in a region of rivers, creeks, and ponds largely tributary to the James. This was one of the eight original " shires " in the year 1634, and the first name it bore was the Indian name of Warrosquoyacke. Over each of these shires was placed a lieutenant, as in old England, for warfare with the Indians was still an ever-present menace.

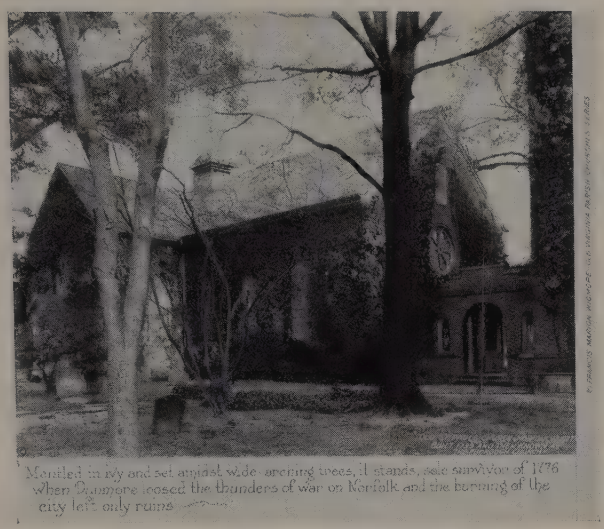

"Wandering 'mid the quiet surroundings of the old Church, we pause, and turn
in thought to those days of 1607, when the first Colonists, landing from their
frail barks, hard by here, saw "great smokes" of Indian fires, and goodly
trees of Cedar, Cypress and other kinds

OLD DONATION CHURCH

In Princess Anne County, Virginia, 1927
Erected 1694

Truly, here was desolation sufficient to deter all but the strongest of heart, for only portions of the walls were left standing in the solitude of nature's domains! But now, rebuilded, the ancient texture and color of the older portions suffuse the whole with their own delicate tones, whilst the shielding ivy gropes its way over the old and the new and softens our poignant realization of all that has happened.

Old Donation succeeded the colonists' earlier house of worship, not far distant, but long since disappeared, its cemetery under the waters of the Lynnhaven River, but its baptismal font and a pewter alms basin saved. This submergence came about in a curious way. Some of the parishioners were fisher folk, as the apostles of old, and, in order to save themselves a roundabout journey to the fishing grounds, they cut a short and narrow waterway from the Lynnhaven River to the bay, though with vastly greater consequences than they ever dreamed of. The winter storms opened the causeway, creating a broad deep current, and the waters of the new inlet cut their way into the church grounds. Finally, most of the graveyard was submerged and the tombs and bones of the dead found a resting place at the bottom of Lynnhaven River. As a sequel to this tragic happening, Bishop Meade was informed that, in 1819, Commodore Decatur and another eminent person were bathing in these waters, and were enabled, by feeling with their toes, to decipher the names of those whom the tombstones had covered before the Chesapeake waters entered and carried away the churchyard.


Mantled in ivy and set amidst wide-arching trees, it stands, sole survivor of 1776
when Dunmore loosed the thunders of war on Norfolk and the burning of the
city left only ruins

OLD ST. PAUL'S CHURCH

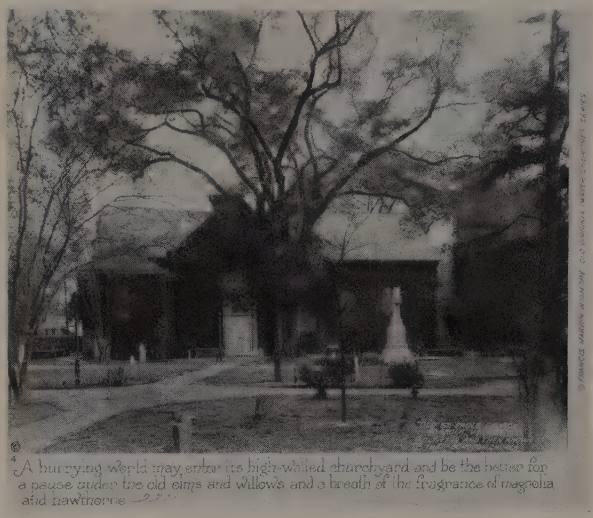
Norfolk, Virginia, 1927
Built 1739 and known as "The Borough Church"

With the dawn of that epochal year 1776, disaster pressed hard upon this church, for the bombardment of Norfolk by the English Fleet of Lord Dunmore (John Murray, by birth name), the last Colonial Governor under the Crown, left the city in ruins and old St. Paul's did not escape. The interior was burned, but the walls, being of ample strength, resisted not only the fire but the cannon balls of the foe. There is still to be seen, high up in one of the walls and now cemented in its indenture, the cannon-ball shot from the frigate *Liverpool*, January 1, 1776, when the bombardment commenced.

In this same south wall, curiously outlined by bricks standing out from the others, is to be seen the date of the building of the church, 1739, and below this the letters "S. B.," supposed to designate the name of Samuel Boush, who is said to have given the land on which old St. Paul's and its graveyard stand.

In the vestry-book, an order was entered, in 1750, "that Captain John Cook, Captain John Shriff, Captain John Calvert, and Mr. Charles Sweny be allowed to build a gallery in the church in Norfolk, reaching from the gallery of Mr. John Taylor to the school-boys' gallery, to be theirs and their heirs, forever."

It appears that this church was galleried in each member of the cross (it being cruciform in design), by private individuals, except that set apart for the school boys.


A hurrying world may enter its high-walled churchyard and be the better for a pause under the old elms and willows and a breath of the fragrance of magnolia and hawthorne

OLD ST. PAUL'S CHURCH

Norfolk, Virginia, 1927
Built 1739 and known as "The Borough Church"

The detached tower on the right was added in 1901, but the ancient church, cruciform in shape, has come safely through wars and pestilence, fire and abandonment, and to-day, in its lovely setting, begets inspiration and reminiscence. A noted churchman has well described the present building as being very pleasing in its proportions, following, except for the ceiling of the interior, which was changed, the simple Norman lines of many of the village churches of the period in old England.

There is an entry in the vestry book, which dates from 1749 to 1761, showing that Mr. Smith, the minister, received annually sixteen thousand-weight of tobacco for preaching at the mother-church (St. Paul's, in Norfolk) and four thousand for each of the three chapels—that at the Great Bridge, where one of the first battles of the Revolution was fought, that at Tanner's Creek, and the Southern Branch Chapel.

Many a heart is refreshed by contemplation of the charm of the old churchyard, and to the Reverend Okeson, rector, 1856–1862, is attributed the resolve to make it equal to the fairest he had seen in the mother country.

During the great civil conflict, when guns once more thundered in Norfolk, St. Paul's was taken possession of by the Federal forces, and, after the war, was returned to the old Presbytery and congregation.

Situated in old Lynnhaven Parish, whose bounds remained unchanged for 253 years, this Venerable building is greatly revered and has an abiding hold on our hearts

OLD EASTERN SHORE CHAPEL

In Princess Anne County, Virginia, 1927
Built 1754

Turning our faces toward the rising sun, we now journey into that preeminently tidewater county of Virginia called Princess Anne. Washed as it is by the broad Atlantic on the east, we see for miles a long range of picturesque sand dunes, and there are few more interesting localities in the State. Old Eastern Shore Chapel now stands where two previous chapels of wooden construction had successively stood and served the first generations of settlers. Only a few miles distant is Cape Henry, where the first colonists landed and erected a cross, April 29, 1607.

In these times it is hard for us to realize that a strong belief in witchcraft obtained almost to the date of the building of this church, and the unique trial of one Grace Sherwood, of Lynnhaven Parish, about the year 1700, showed startlingly how credulous people were. The spot on Lynnhaven River whither she was carried and where she was bound and put in above man's depth, that they might " try her how she swims," is still called Witch Duck. It is a very pretty spot and not far distant. In contrast to the disagreeable charges, such as bewitching their cotton and passing through the keyhole or crack of a door in the likeness of a black cat, a pretty tradition exists that Grace Sherwood brought rosemary across the sea in an eggshell to Princess Anne County, where the fragrant shrub still exists.

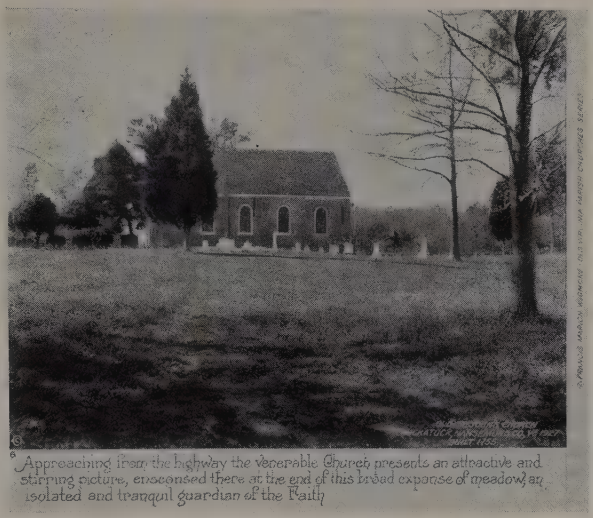
Here on Jordan's Mill Hill, amid the quiet companionship of great trees, Poplars, Walnuts and this aged Cedar, the Old Glebe Church unfolds to the visitor its memories of near 200 years

OLD GLEBE CHURCH

In Nansemond County, Virginia, 1927
Built about the year 1738

A parish or church " glebe " was the land belonging or appertaining to it, and here the minister usually resided and farmed the land for his own benefit. Sometimes the glebe was a gift or a devise by will, but more often it was acquired by the parish vestry. Thus, when church and state were rent asunder politically, after the Revolution, the glebe lands were declared forfeited and turned over to the *overseers of the poor* or ordered sold, unless it could be proven by the parish that its glebe had been a private gift, or devised by will to the church or parish claiming it.

The valuable glebe-land farm of Old Glebe Church is one of the very few left to any church, and it has afforded a fanciful and unique name for this quaint and historic old church. Here, in 1775, was witnessed one of those stirring scenes, where loyalty to the king or to the colonists' cause was the supreme test, and the rector of many years' standing was driven from the church for his subservience to the Crown.


Approaching from the highway the venerable Church presents an attractive and stirring picture, enseconsed there at the end of this broad expanse of meadow, an isolated and tranquil guardian of the Faith

OLD ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

Near Chuckatuck, in Nansemond County, Virginia
Built 1755

Chuckatuck is one of the Indian names which survives and perhaps is even now a bit perverted. The old church has replaced a still more ancient one, built on or near this same spot. The actual beginnings of the parish take us back one hundred years or more before the present building was erected.

Here, in Nansemond County, the Puritans or Independents had gained a strong foothold. This was disquieting to the authorities, for religion and political adherence went hand in hand. Virginia was strongly royalist during the bitter struggle between King and Parliament. Independence in religion was, in effect, political disloyalty. In 1648 an effort was made to dislodge their organization by banishment of their leaders and finally an order was issued to disarm all Independents.

In 1703 the vestry of this Chuckatuck Parish became involved in a bitter controversy with the colonial Governor Nicholson over its parochial rights respecting the induction of a new minister when a vacancy in the parish occurred. This, in reality, involved one of the fundamental principles of democratic government, which in due course, as these controversies accumulated, gave birth to the Revolution. This case was typical of the situation in many parishes; the vestries insisted on self-determination of their ministers, being unwilling to receive a man of the Governor's choice, even though, under certain conditions, according to an opinion of the King's attorney, he had the legal right to insist upon it.

A wanderer in the old churchyard may well experience that hushed reverence born of quietude and age for he treads ground in the oldest existing settlement of our English forbears in America

OLD ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

In Hampton, Virginia, 1927
Built 1728

The town of Hampton displaced the old Indian settlement of Kichotan, and the governing body of the colonists, at Jamestown, had early found it advisable to place a small garrison or settlement here, for it was a key position, healthful, and abounded in fish and game. It became a sort of Cape of Good Hope to the settlers, who called here on their expeditions up the York, Rappahannock, Potomac, and Nansemond Rivers, and it was also the first port which Europeans reached after their long and trying ocean voyage.

Long since gone are the two churches of this parish, built before old St. John's, which now alone links the Parish of Elizabeth City—the oldest parish in continuous existence—with the earliest days of Virginia. Elizabeth City was the name legally given to the settlement, after the pretty Indian name of Kichotan was discarded, and it was so called after Elizabeth, daughter of King James I, who became Queen of Bohemia. We are told that Hampton (being a contraction of Southampton) was named after Henry Wriothesly, Earl of Southampton, Treasurer of the London company.

Blooming shrubs, Ivy and Boxwood and trees of many sorts make the church-yard a rare garden, sacred to the past and filling the present with the sweetness of life

OLD ST. JOHN'S CHURCH
In Hampton, Virginia, 1927
Built 1728

The ivy-clad tower was added in recent years. Adjoining is the old east wall, built with antiquated, glazed-end bricks, soft toned and set in wovenlike pattern, attesting its early origin.

One of the historic treasures of old St. John's is some communion service silver, a chalice and small paten, made in London in 1618 and brought to Virginia in 1619. They were given by a Mrs. Mary Robinson, of London, to a different church, one endowed by her, in the settlement called Smith's Hundred, in Virginia, especially with the hope of converting the Indians. But that settlement was almost wholly destroyed in the terrible massacre by the Indians in 1622. The communion silver was saved and taken to Jamestown and afterwards brought here to Elizabeth City Parish; and, as if in answer to the prayers of the donor, it has been used in the administering of the holy communion to young Indian communicants from the Hampton Normal School.

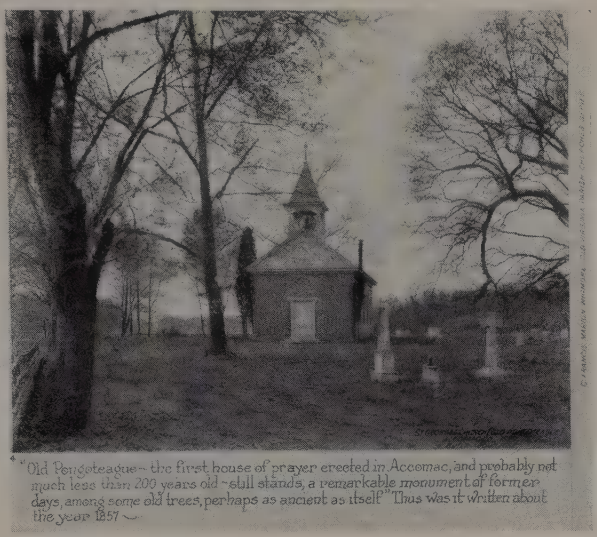
During the Revolutionary War the church met with irreverent use. In the War of 1812 Hampton was sacked and plundered by the enemy, whilst the church itself was not spared during the saturnalia of lust and violence, and it became a common shelter for horses, cattle, and swine. Again, in the Civil War when the inhabitants of Hampton set fire to their homes, upon the approach of the Federal forces, the old church was burned and only the walls were left standing.

In a picturesque setting of towering Pines and great-trunked shade trees, the old Church stands forth, an inspiring landmark. It lies at the head of Hungar's Creek, one of those beautiful tidal inlets of the Chesapeake Bay country

OLD HUNGAR'S CHURCH

In Northampton County, Virginia, 1927
Believed built 1680–1691

This sea-girt peninsula of Virginia, where lies Old Hungar's Church, is so isolated from the great body of its own State by the vast Chesapeake Bay that it seems like a land apart, thrust out into the deep waters to shift for itself, facing the moods of the Chesapeake on the one side and the caprices of the Atlantic on the other. On account of its detached position, early writers have used the title "Virginia and Accomac," the latter name meaning the peninsula. Two colonial-day churches are priceless charges of the two counties of the peninsula, the one called Old Hungar's in Northampton County and the other St. George's or Old Pongoteague in Accomac County. The church's own records are sadly scanty, but it stands as one of the few ties which now bind the early days of the Eastern Shore settlements with our own times. Of generous and graceful proportions, ivy-clad and weather-stained, it seems to radiate a kind benevolence on all around, whilst within its thick-built walls, the great arched windows of unusual height and symmetry and six feet in width admit a flood of light and cheer. We are told that, prior to the Revolution, the interior furnishings of Old Hungar's Church were very handsome—most, if not all, sent from England, gifts of Queen Anne.


"Old Pongoteague—the first house of prayer erected in Accomac, and probably not much less than 200 years old—still stands, a remarkable monument of former days, among some old trees, perhaps as ancient as itself" Thus was it written about the year 1857

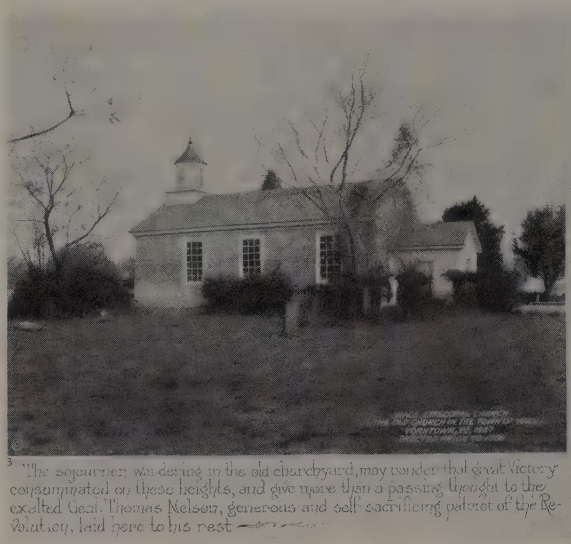
OLD ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH
(*" Old Pongoteague "*)
In Accomac County, Virginia, 1927
Built about 1652

Old Pongoteague, as it is called by its familiars, lies some twenty miles to the north of Old Hungar's, on the Virginia peninsula, and these two companions in youth and old age have together watched the tide of human struggle and achievement, as it ebbed and flowed around them in the turmoil of storms and the calm of orderly events.

Both have suffered for lack of the protective care which was their due; and in the near past a writer tells of having known persons who remembered to have seen cows grazing on the grass growing in the brick-paved aisles of old St. George's.

About 1857 it was described by Bishop Meade as a brick building in the form of a cross, which, though well built, and in some parts still firm and unyielding, yet in others giving signs of decay and ruin. He stated that breaches in the walls were apparent and that the rains from above found their way through its moldering roof.

At some time after the dissolution of the ties betwixt church and state, it is related that the " overseers of the poor " (civil functionaries) took possession of the communion plate of Accomac Parish and sold the same to a silversmith, who intended to melt it up; but, being advised that it was doubtful whether they had any authority to sell the plate under the law directing the sale of the glebe-lands, and there being a tradition that the plate was a private donation, the sale was rescinded. What a fortunate reaction of stilted minds to a legal doubt!


"The sojourner wandering in the old churchyard, may ponder that great victory consummated on these heights, and give more than a passing thought to the exalted Genl. Thomas Nelson, generous and self-sacrificing patriot of the Revolution, laid here to his rest —

OLD GRACE CHURCH

In Yorktown, Virginia, 1927
Erected prior to 1700

The old church is probably the same to which, in 1696, Governor Nicholson subscribed the sum of twenty pounds, if built within two years and of brick. Perhaps this latter requirement was waived for Bishop Meade has said:

> At length in the year 1815, the old church was burned down. The material of the church was remarkable. The walls were made of blocks of marl, taken out of the bank of the river on which it stood, and which hardened by exposure. It was cemented yet the more by the fire which caused it to melt somewhat and thus form one solid wall which continued to stand until the roof and other parts were renewed a few years since.

So much has happened hereabouts, that whilst the eye is engrossed with the scenery, the mind is flooded with emotions in contemplating the panorama of history. Here the weary armies of the Revolutionary War finally closed the struggle and Cornwallis capitulated.

Inseparably connected with York and the old church is the name of the Nelson family. Of Gen. Thomas Nelson, jr., friend of Washington, one has said that he certainly entered the war very rich, and came out of it so poor that when a few years had passed away, and he was laid in the old graveyard at York, without a headstone or a slab to mark the spot, his property, save the old house in deserted York and some poor broom-straw fields in Hanover, was put up at public sale to pay the debts contracted in his country's cause.

OLD ABINGDON CHURCH

In Gloucester County, Virginia, 1927
Probably completed about 1755, perhaps earlier

A previous church, whose foundations were close by, is supposed to have been built on land donated by Col. Augustine Warner, whose daughter Mildred was George Washington's grandmother, and here she must have worshipped and received her early religious training. That church was used about one hundred years, but, on its becoming unsafe, steps were taken to build the present beautiful Abingdon.

Gloucester County was carved out of York County about 1651 and the unusual extent and nature of its waterfront, its quiet waters for oyster gathering, its fertile land and salubrious climate attracted both Indians and the early settlers. Here were located Abingdon, Ware, Petsworth, and Kingston parishes; but, at best, only remnants of foundations tell where stood Petsworth and Kingston churches and earlier old chapels of the days when almost solid forests shadowed the land and the Indian trails.

A few miles only from Old Abingdon is the strategic place on the York River, called Werowocomico, where the wise, wily, and cruel Indian potentate Powhatan made his permanent or chief home; and, if the story be authentic, where the superbly daring Pocahontas bravely intervened and preserved Capt. John Smith's life, as in the Indian fashion, he was about to be brained.

Only dim light from scattered sources is shed on the history of this shrine – but it
remains today a great monument to the piety and culture of those who wrought
and dwelt here

OLD ABINGDON CHURCH

In Gloucester County, Virginia, 1927
Probably completed about 1755, perhaps earlier

During the Civil War, as a precautionary step, the records of Gloucester County were carried to Richmond, but were there destroyed by fire on April 2, 1865, and during this war some of the colonial-day pews were destroyed, whilst others formed stalls for horses.

Previously, in 1820, a fire had destroyed the clerk's office, with its contents, at Botetourt (now called Gloucester), the county seat. By these early conflagrations many precious documents have been utterly consumed, as well as homes, churches, and courthouses and all that went with them to make up the picture of the life of that day. Truly, such of the handiwork of the colonists as now remains to us is without price and stirs the breast with emotion, even though its whole story, which we so much long to know, may be but told in threads and patches.

The church is cruciform in design, and this west entrance is superb in its symmetry and grace, and the old flagstone pathway in front. Old Abingdon lies about six miles from Gloucester Point on York River.

From the heights of Yorktown, opposite to Gloucester Point, Cornwallis made a last despairing effort, under cover of darkness, to cross the river stealthily and escape, but fate and the elements turned him back to a just doom.

OLD WARE CHURCH

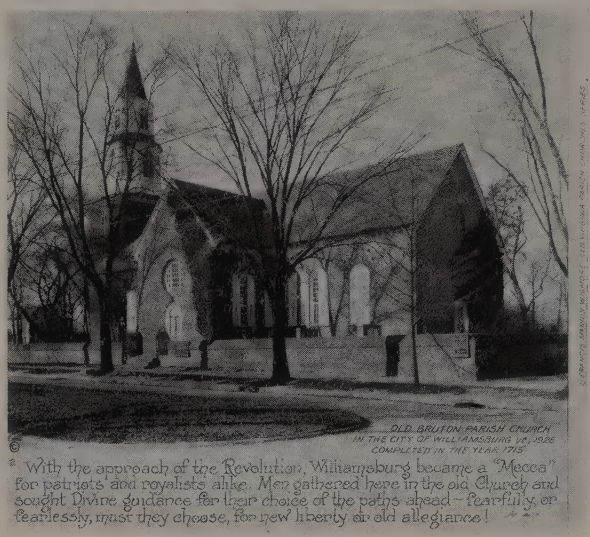
In Gloucester County, Virginia, 1927
Built about the year 1690

Ware Parish was established between 1652 and 1654. Though tradition says that there was a former church or chapel about one and one-half miles distant, the present church was built about 1690. It lies in historic Gloucester County, about eight miles from Old Abingdon Church. Should we take the ancient Indian " warpath " running a few miles west of the latter, and follow it onward with the cunning and swiftness of the moccasin-footed men, we would soon arrive hard by to where Old Ware Church now stands.

Twelve large and impressive arched windows light the simple and dignified interior; and the highly glazed brick ends in the wall, on the outside, form a pattern of soft color tones, as though wrought in a weaver's loom.

During colonial days there seems to have been, in all churches, the same general absence of provision for heating them in cold weather, but certain well-to-do families, no doubt, brought heating boxes, charcoal braziers, hot bricks, and abundant wraps.

We are told that soon after 1800, during the period of the church's disorganization, Old Ware lacked a minister for ten years, and for a part of this time its doors were left open, so that passing persons and beasts found shelter from storms under its roof.


OLD BRUTON PARISH CHURCH
IN THE CITY OF WILLIAMSBURG VA. WAS
COMPLETED IN THE YEAR 1715
With the approach of the Revolution, Williamsburg became a "Mecca"
for patriots and royalists alike. Men gathered here in the old Church and
sought Divine guidance for their choice of the paths ahead – fearfully or
fearlessly, must they choose, for new liberty or old allegiance!

OLD BRUTON PARISH CHURCH

In the city of Williamsburg, Virginia, 1928
Completed in 1715

The history of Bruton Parish really begins with the expansion of settlement beyond Jamestown. In 1632 Middle Plantation (afterwards Williamsburg) was "laid out and paled in," seven miles inland from Jamestown. Middle Plantation Parish was created, also a Harrop Parish established. These were united and called Middletown Parish. Later, a Marston Parish was formed, and subsequently, in 1674, Marston and Middletown were merged under the name Bruton Parish. Economics and expediency entered into life then, as to-day!

As it is always an interesting digression from the study of dates and mere facts to speculate on the origin of names, it would seem most probable, in this connection, that the now historic and appealing name of Bruton was given to the Parish and the Church in honor of Thomas Ludwell, Esquire, sometime Secretary of Virginia. The inscription on his tomb bears out this deduction and reads as follows:

Under this Marble lieth the Body
of Thomas Ludwell Esq^{r}
Secretary of Virginia, who was born
at Bruton in the County of Somerset
in the Kingdom of ENGLAND, and
departed this Life in the Year 1678 And
near this place lye the Bodies of Richard
Kemp, Esq^{r} his Predecessor in y^{e} Secretarys
Office and S^{r} Thomas Lunsford K^{t}
in Memory of whom this Marble is placed
by Order of Philip Ludwell Esq^{r}
Nephew of the said Thomas Ludwell
in the Year 1727

OLD BRUTON PARISH CHURCH
IN THE CITY OF WILLIAMSBURG VA 1928
COMPLETED IN THE YEAR 1715
Spacious grounds surround the old Church, and season by season nature adorns this ancient churchyard with peculiar loveliness and charm — with the tender flowers of Spring and the deep shadows of Summer, with the Autumn tints and the evergreens of Winter

OLD BRUTON PARISH CHURCH

In the city of Williamsburg, Virginia, 1928
Completed in the year 1715

Washington makes mention in his diary of attending services here and adds, "and fasted all day." The good Bishop Meade recounts that when the decisive step was about to be taken by the Colonies, in relation to the mother country, after they had denounced and renounced her as a cruel stepmother and were about to take up arms and appeal to the god of battles to aid them in their just rights, the patriots determined to do this with the most solemn forms of religion.

So, on the twenty-fourth day of May, 1774, the members of the Assembly, at their meeting in Williamsburg, after setting forth in a well-written preamble the condition of the country, the evils oppressing us, the dangers to be feared, and their determination to assert our just rights, "Resolved to set apart a day for fasting, humiliation, and prayer; and ordered that the members of the House do attend in their places, at the hour of ten in the morning, on the first day of June next, in order to proceed with the Speaker and the mace, to the church in this city for the purpose aforesaid; and that the Rev. Mr. Price be requested to read prayers and the Rev. Mr. Gwatkin preach a sermon suitable to the occasion." Where could we find a more vivid picture of the intensity and depth of feeling engendered and of how Old Bruton Parish Church served the life of the young Nation?

OLD BRUTON PARISH CHURCH
IN THE CITY OF WILLIAMSBURG, VA.
COMPLETED IN THE YEAR 1715
© FRANCIS HARMON WORKMAN OLD VIRGINIA AMERICAN CHURCHES SERIES
Official distinction was recognized and emphasized in this old Church, in the capital city of the Colony. To his Excelleney the Governor and his Council of State was assigned a pew, overhung by a rich red canopy, upon which the Governor's name was emblazoned in letters of gold

OLD BRUTON PARISH CHURCH

In the city of Williamsburg, Virginia, 1928
Completed in the year 1715

It has been said that "as London and the Universities were in one sense England, Paris and its University, France, so Williamsburg (while it was the seat of government) and the College of William and Mary were, to a great extent, Virginia. Here her Governor and chief officers resided; here her Council often repaired and her Burgesses annually met."

The pews in the choir were assigned to the Parish Rector and to that very important functionary of colonial days, the Surveyor-General. In the square pews of the transepts sat the Members of the House of Burgesses, whilst in the overhanging galleries were people of wealth and distinction, to whom the privilege of erecting these private galleries was accorded from time to time. The congregation was often made up of the authority and intelligence, the fashion and wealth of the Colony, besides the youth of William and Mary College.

In the old churchyard and in the aisles and chancel of the church itself were interred many whose names and deeds are outstanding memories of the times.

2. "The pilgrim and the stranger who tarry but a night, is sure to wend his way and pay his homage at this shrine"—moss-vevéted and ivy-embroidered

OLD BLANDFORD CHURCH

In Bristol Parish, Petersburg, Virginia, 1927
Built 1735–1737

This region, along the Appomattox, is replete with historic interest, from the time of the earliest settlements. It was first set aside as Bristol Parish in 1643. The church was first known as the Brick Church on Wells's Hill. Opened in 1737, it became the religious center of the Parish.

The old church and its environs hold an inexpressible charm for the poet and the antiquarian, for the soul that loves a respite from the urge and toil of human affairs. Wandering through the churchyard, midst the softly creeping shadows, brings to mind those spiritual and solacing lines of Longfellow:

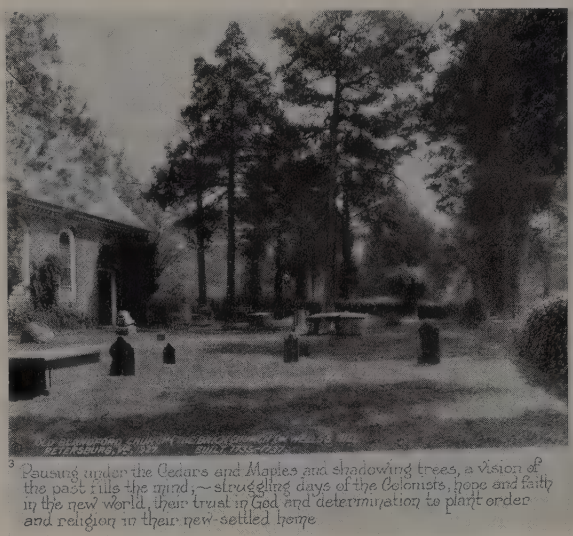
GOD'S-ACRE

I like that ancient Saxon phrase which calls
The burial-ground God's-Acre! It is just;
It consecrates each grave within its walls,
And breathes a benison o'er the sleeping dust.

Indeed the woes of war hereabouts filled the cup to overflowing, for during the Revolution colonial troops bombarded the enemy, who were occupying Petersburg. Later, in the Civil War, Petersburg was under siege by the Federals for ten months, and not far distant from old Blandford were the Confederate earthworks.

From the verses of "A Stranger," writ on the inner walls of the old church, in the long past, in the days of its neglect, are these lines:

Thou art crumbling to the dust, old pile!
Thou art hastening to thy fall;
And around thee in thy loneliness
Clings the ivy to thy wall.


3 Pausing under the Cedars and Maples and shadowing trees, a vision of the past fills the mind,—struggling days of the Colonists, hope and faith in the new world, their trust in God and determination to plant order and religion in their new-settled home

OLD BLANDFORD CHURCH

In Bristol Parish, Petersburg, Virginia, 1927
Built 1735–1737

The old colonial-day town of Blandford is now overshadowed and absorbed by Petersburg, although they were both raised to the rank of towns in the year 1748. The tobacco trade gave its impulse to Blandford, and as soon as the American trade was thrown open to Scotland, by the latter's union with England in 1707, Virginia's chief market became Glasgow.

One of Glasgow's merchants owned twenty-five ships in the trade. Tobacco lords promenaded the Trongate in long scarlet robes and bushy wigs, and other men gave way as they passed. Blandford shared in this prosperity. There were those living in the near-by past who had "dim memories or shadowy traditions of the merry marriages, the sumptuous dinners, the brilliant balls, and the shining equipages which made Blandford the centre around which society revolved." In the midst of this pulsating life stood the old Brick Church on Wells's Hill, radiating from its calm and lovely setting an indefinable influence upon the homes which surrounded it.

After the Revolution the old town of Blandford rapidly declined in importance as a tobacco port, whilst its sister town of Petersburg grew steadily. Finally, services were discontinued in the old church, and, abandoned, it fell into ruins and so remained till succoring hands saved it from destruction.

This Church's fanciful and suggestive name was taken from the old plantation on which it stood and a Bark called YE MERCHANT'S HOPE plied between England and Virginia in 1634

OLD MERCHANT'S HOPE CHURCH

In Prince George County, Virginia, 1927
History vague; built (presumably) 1657

Advancing up the James River, from its mouth, just as the colonists did in their days of pioneering toil and peril, and leaving on either hand the sites of several vanished colonial-day churches, we shall pass on the left close to one which has survived and is called Merchant's Hope Church. It is situated about fourteen miles from Petersburg, by land travel.

It seems a far cry from the epic and immortal Shakespeare to these early Virginia heroics, but by one thread in the weaving of human events a certain Richard Quiney, whose brother Thomas had married Shakespeare's daughter Judith, in 1616, became part owner in this great tract of land which included Merchant's Hope and Martin's Brandon plantations, where the lovely Brandon homestead still stands.

It is of stirring interest to tread the rugged old flagstones, within the church, which, as of yore, still pave the aisles six feet in width, leading from both doors to meet at the chancel, for it is marvelous to think that these rough-hewn tiles, which have borne witness to all who have entered its doors for going on three hundred years now, have survived the stress of wars and the periods of neglect, to which so many and so much of the churches have succumbed.

[1] The eye is gladdened and the heart beats faster in sight of Old Westover—
as lowly in lines and as dear to the soul, as a cottagers home—but in such a
setting, amongst great Oaks and Poplars and Cedars and the green-
sward below, as only God can make

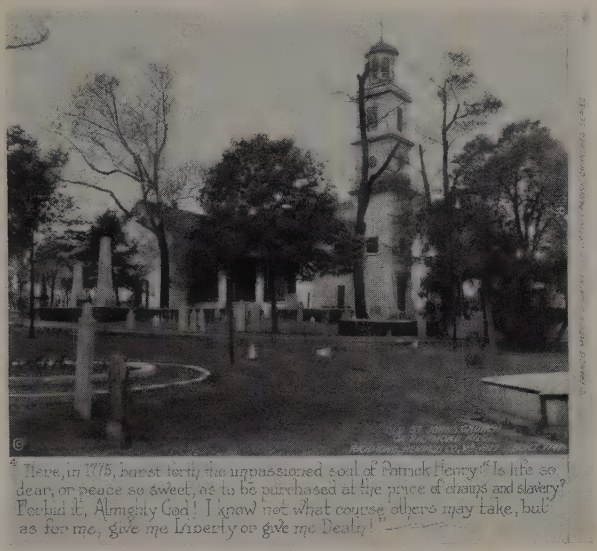
OLD WESTOVER CHURCH

In Charles City County, Virginia, 1927
Believed reerected here between 1737 and 1748

Westover Parish, established before 1652, took its name from the Westover tract, which was granted to Capt. Francis West, in 1619, for Henry West, the son and heir of Thomas [West], Lord De la Warr, Governor and Captain General of Virginia, who died in 1618, whilst on his second voyage to Virginia.

Here, on the James River, was built, by Col. Wm. Byrd, scholar and statesman, the present Westover Mansion, superbly elegant in its architecture. This Col. Wm. Byrd died in 1744. The original Westover Church and its churchyard were near the present Westover Mansion, about one-quarter mile up the river bank, where there are some very old tombstones. This building, however, was removed brick by brick by "Mrs. Byrd to her land Evelyngton," about two miles away and the present church erected on the new site. The time of the removal of the original building, brick by brick, has been deduced as between 1737 and 1748, since the oldest unbroken monument in the present churchyard is dated 1748 and the last known interment in the older churchyard was that of Mistress Evelyn Byrd, 1737.

Though its actual building date be unknown, the present Old Westover makes up in human interest, and by the sublime charm of its setting, for this historic omission of fact. A treasured relic of the church is its old communion silver marked "Ex dono Sara Braine."


"Here, in 1775, burst forth the unpassioned soul of Patrick Henry: "Is life so
dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery?
Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but
as for me, give me Liberty or give me Death!"

OLD ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

On Richmond Hill, in the city of Richmond, Henrico County, Virginia, 1927
Built 1741

This shrine was the scene of Patrick Henry's great speech—that immortal epic in American history! The second Revolutionary Convention of Virginia had assembled at Richmond, in March, 1775. It was held in old St. John's Church and attended by Washington, Jefferson, Richard Henry Lee, and others whose names are on our country's roll of honor. A tense atmosphere prevailed, the specter of war was abroad, and many honestly feared to turn that specter into flesh and blood.

Patrick Henry offered resolutions proposing a committee to prepare a plan for embodying arming and disciplining of a body of militia within the State. Knowing full well its import and the hesitating and timorous attitude of many, we are told that his soul and body seemed metamorphosed in his passionate plea to throw off the fetters of misgovernment and dedicate the country to a new life of autonomy.

Frail looking and unadorned, it has well withstood the adversities of the passing years, and in quaint garb of white, midst shrubs and flowers and ancient trees, the old church has now become a sacred trust to all who would revere the past, love the present, and inspire the future.

It has been truly said that "to day after more than two hundred years of authenticated history, St Peter's Church stands, to all intents and purposes, as good as new, a monument to those who built and worshipped in it"

OLD ST. PETER'S CHURCH

In new Kent County, Virginia, 1927
Built 1701–1703

Old St. Peter's makes an especial appeal to the heart and imagination, for it was the parish or home church of Mrs. Daniel Parke Custis, later and best known to all the world as Martha Washington. During her widowhood, as Mrs. Custis, she lived at her home called the "White House," situated but a few miles distant on the Pamunkey River. Here George Washington called upon her, in his travels between Mount Vernon and Williamsburg.

Bishop Meade is authority for the statement that their marriage took place at the "White House," her home, and that the Rev. David Mossom, who was rector of the parish and Old St. Peter's Church for forty years, officiated at their nuptials. Some persons, however, have thought that the ceremony was performed at the old Brick Church, or St. Peter's, as we know it.

As illustrating the very beginnings of the building of the church, the first reference in the old vestry book to the present St. Peter's is found in the minutes of the vestry meeting of the parish, held August 13, 1700, and reads: "Whereas the Lower Church of this parish is very much out of Repair and Standeth very inconvenient for most of the inhabitants of the said parish. Therefore ordered that as soon as conveniently may be a new Church of Brick Sixty feet long and twenty fower feet wide in the cleer and fourteen feet pitch with a Gallery Sixteen feet long be built and Erected upon the maine road by the School House near Thomas Jackson's;"—and this is Old St. Peter's!

For 40 years was Revd. David Meade Rector here. He died 1781 and was the person,
says Bishop Meade, who officiated at the nuptials of General Washington, at the
White House, a few miles from St Peters Church

OLD ST. PETER'S CHURCH

In New Kent County, Virginia, 1927
Built 1701–1703

Quite away from the travelled highway, in the quiet seclusion of a beautiful woodland setting, Old St. Peter's somberly watches the passing years; and to the sojourner, there seems to come from the unseen "somewhere," a welcoming gesture, an invitation to rest and enter into communion with its companions of days gone by.

Quaintly symbolic, and carrying the mind, in retrospect, to the customs of former times, are the two crossed keys set atop the tower of Old St. Peter's; for according to Matthew, Jesus said to Peter: "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

As perhaps showing the spirit of the age and the peremptory manner of the man, Governor Nicholson, in 1699, addressed a letter to the High-Sheriff of New Kent County (in which St. Peter's Parish lies) ordering the clergy of that county to meet him in Jamestown. Under the commands of this document, which were made in His Majesty's name, the ministers were to meet the Governor on the day appointed, and bring with them their "Priests' and Deacons' Orders" and their license for preaching, from the Bishop of London, or whatever they had; and a copy of the agreement on the parish vestry book, as made between themselves and their parishes. Furthermore, the Vestries of parishes without ministers were to report the reason for such lack and whether they had a Reader.

How inexorable is the tragic result of neglect and disuse! Each generation must take upon itself the solemn duty of Trusteeship over these quaint and sacred bonds with the past, else has it failed the Past, the Present and the Future

OLD ST. JOHN'S

(Old West Point Church)

In King William County, Virginia, 1927
The Mother Church of St. John's Parish
Built 1734

St. John's Parish was established in 1691 whilst the old church was built in 1734, and lies some ten miles from West Point, where the Pamunkey and Mattaponi Rivers mingle and transfer their burdens of flood to the River York; thence to be carried to the great Mother of Waters.

Carter Braxton, signer of the Declaration of Independence, was of this parish. Hereabouts for many years preached and ministered to the people, the Rev. Henry Skyren, their well-beloved parson; spoken of as " an elegant scholar and accomplished gentleman, who was alike remarkable for his eloquence and piety." A reliable witness has said that when Mr. Skyren preached in King William [County] " the Acquinton Church was always so crowded that the people used to bring their seats and fill up the aisle after the pews were full."

In 1927 [1] the scene at St. John's was as though the century-ago period of abandonment had been renewed. How desolate to enter within the walls, to look on the dismal, plasterless patches, and to reflect on how the old church had passed from sunlight to shadow! Happily, and most unusual, the flagstones were saved, though lying cracked and broken in the aisles. But where are gone the old furniture and woodwork, of becoming design and fashioned with skill?

[1] Since then rehabilitated by the good doings of friends.

In 1840, roofless and deserted, a huge, out-spreading Sycamore tree occupied the vacuum within its then uninjured walls-faithful workmanship of other days

OLD CHRIST CHURCH

In Middlesex County, Virginia, 1927
This church built 1712. A previous church on the same site, built 1666

The county of Middlesex is a narrow peninsula, lying between the Rappahannock and Piankatank Rivers, and, as its eastern boundary is washed by the waters of the mighty Chesapeake, it was easily accessible to the earliest settlers; so that it is natural to find that a church was soon built here, and old Christ Church is styled in her journal as the Great Church.

There were two chapels or churches toward either end of the county, not less probably than twelve or fifteen miles distant from the central or Mother Church (the Great Church). Those communicants who lived at either end of the parish must have had some twenty miles to travel in order to partake of the Communion, as it was only proposed to have it at the Mother Church and probably administered but twice a year.

One of the duties of the lay readers of the parish was to see that everything about the church was kept clean and in order, and that the leaves around the church (which was built in the woods) should be burned, in order to preserve it from destruction by some of the great fires which were common in the woods.

Its early history veiled in obscurity and resting upon dim tradition, this
venerable building has borne well the burden and stress of two centuries

OLD VAUTER'S CHURCH

In Essex County, Virginia, 1927
Built 1731 or earlier

Standing like a phantom by the roadside, the old church suddenly comes upon our view. It has outlived a companion church in the parish, long since destroyed and even its name lost, we are told. It is near neighbor to the noble Rappahannock, flowing on and on to the Mother of Waters, the vast Chesapeake.

Here in springtime the wild grape and the eglantine give forth exquisite fragrance. Situated on the river's south bank, though scarce realizing its proximity for the wooded screen betwixt, it lies near midway between Fredericksburg and the pretty riverside town of Tappahannock or Hobbe's Hole, as it was called in colonial days of river transport.

Over the old south doorway may be seen a brick inscribed with the date 1731. How fixed is our duty to maintain these few remaining companions of the lives of our forefathers may well be impressed upon us by pondering upon the fact that both old churches in the neighboring parish of South Farnham have been destroyed. The one pulled down, the other burned; bricks were found in other buildings, flagstones from the aisles used for walks and hearthstones, the monuments to the dead dragged from their resting places and even made into grindstones, which, years ago, were still identified by parts of the original inscriptions remaining.

Bishop Meade said (1836) that old Christ Church "exhibits to
this day one of the most striking monuments of the fidelity of
ancient architecture to be seen in our land"

OLD CHRIST CHURCH

In Lancaster County, Virginia, 1927
Completed about 1732

Situated near the wide-spreading mouth of the Rappahannock River it is builded in the form of the Greek cross, with rugged walls three feet through, and massive foundation. It stands now in its perfection and simplicity of design, a beautiful example of colonial-day church architecture. The roofs are very high and steep and take the place of tower or steeple.

John Carter (died 1669), the first of that name in Virginia, is buried by the chancel, within, and was father to Robert ("King") Carter, venerated builder of the church. The latter's home estate, "Corotoman," near-by, comprised eight thousand acres, and he was possessed of many thousands besides. Tradition says the congregation did not enter the church on Sundays until the arrival of Col. Robert ("King") Carter's great coach, whereupon they followed the "King" into church.

In 1927 were to be seen here the original pews, of the old fashion, high backed and very firm, the large freestone paving blocks in the aisles, and the ancient pulpit high and lofty. Isolated, suffering deterioration, its future perplexed and dubious, lay this Temple beyond price, holding treasures without duplicate, and reflecting, as a mirror, a manner of life utterly gone.

Its voice might even then have cried out from the wilderness, as did Anaxagóras, when driven from Athens, "'Tis not I who lose the Athenians, but the Athenians who lose me."

And graves are here dear which may weep
The friends whom memory long shall prove;
While many here forgotten sleep
That once had life, and hope, and love.
From blind and talented Robert Dinwiddie's ode to St. Mary's written before 1740

OLD ST. MARY'S WHITE CHAPEL

In Lancaster County, Virginia, 1927
Reconstructed in 1740

Whilst good Bishop Meade has said that the first church was torn down, we are also told that only the two arms of the original building were removed, it having been built in the frequently-used cruciform design and actually erected before 1700.

In the quiet old churchyard may be seen old tombstones of massive marble inscribed with the name of Ball, and five miles distant, at "Epping Forest" lies buried Mary Ball, grandmother of Washington. These shrines betoken a deep regard of the living for the dead. But in the sweep of time and the scattering of kin the forces of nature will surely prevail to destroy these loving memorials, unless each generation may take upon itself the sacred duty of watching over them whilst it carries on.

Within the old church are the tablets containing the Lord's Prayer and Creed given by Capt. William Fox under his will dated 1717, in which he directed as follows: "My wife shall send for the Lord's Prayer and Creed, well drawn in gold letters and my name under each of them, set in decent black frames."

OLD FARNHAM CHURCH
RICHMOND COUNTY
To Old Farnham have been allotted days of pride and days of humiliation. Built in the best mode of ancient architecture, it was the religious home of families of culture and primacy. Later came desertion, spoliation, profanation and fire. At length, rose reconstruction from ruin

OLD FARNHAM CHURCH

In Richmond County, Virginia, 1927
Erected 1737 or earlier

Although legally known as "North Farnham Parish Church," a stranger, seeking his way, would do well to ask only for "Old Farnham" Church. It has, perhaps, suffered even more than its companion churches and 'tis easily perceived where the ancient portions of the walls (suffused with the mellow tones of those antiquated, heavily glazed-end bricks) join all that is new.

During the War of 1812 a skirmish was fought here and bullet holes in the walls may still be seen. Bishop Meade's report to the Convention of 1838 is fittingly noticed here and begins thus: "My appointment next in order was at Farnham Church, which had recently been so much refitted that on this account—because it is believed that none of the old churches were ever consecrated—it was, on Tuesday, the 20th of June, set apart to the worship of God, according to the prescribed form." Continuing, he reported it deserted as a house of God [before its then recent refitting] and become a prey to any and every spoiler. Also, an extensive brick wall which surrounded the church and guarded the graves of the dead was torn down and used for hearths, chimneys, and other purposes, all the county round. It was then used as a distillery and a doorway enlarged to drive wagons within.

After the Civil War it was again repaired and services were held there until 1888, when it was gutted by fire. Desolation now reigned for nearly thirty-five years, whilst the walls still stood, and within grew thick underbrush and locust trees. Then, at last came its present reviviscence.

5 In 1814 it was described as standing in a dell where its silence was only disturbed by the passing breeze, whispering through the pines and cedars and undergrowth which choked up the entrance.

OLD YEOCOMICO CHURCH

In Westmoreland County, Virginia, 1927
Built 1706

During the War of 1812, ships of the British Navy, under Sir John Warren, cruised at the mouth of the Potomac, and here, at the old church, an American troop pitched its camp, so that they might readily make nightly patrol visits to the river bank to guard its historic shores, retiring again to the seclusion and higher ground where the church stands.

At this time they found its doors open, its windows broken, a decayed and falling roof, and even across the structure lay an uprooted tree thirty or forty feet in length. Within, it was the habitat of birds, animals, and creeping things. A fatigue party was detailed to cleanse the church and cut down the surrounding undergrowth. All being done, they were presented with a shady grove, dry ground, and a most inviting and lovely prospect, with abundance of pure delicious water in an alcove of forest trees hard by.

The interest, awakened at this time, of a soldier of the troop, who, in contemplating the scene felt a mysterious attachment for this relic of piety and the early faith of our forefathers, led eventually to its repair and survival to-day. To this soldier, W. L. Rogers, of New Jersey, is due a place of honor in the annals of old Yeocomico.

The imagination is quickened by this fanciful entry-way, with its whimsical pattern in the brick-work. It is time-worn and spacious and level with the ground —

OLD YEOCOMICO CHURCH

In Westmoreland County, Virginia, 1927
Built 1706

Situated amongst the plantations at the mouth of the Potomac River and almost within view of its wide reaches, the old church has stood here for over two hundred years. It lies in that neck of land spanning the intervening space between the courses of the two great rivers, the Potomac and the Rappahannock, and long known to Virginia as "The Northern Neck."

In Westmoreland County were lands and homes of intellectual and well-to-do families; in token of their worth and culture it has been called the Athens of Virginia. But the venerable churches, Popes Creek, Round Hill, Nomini, Leeds, are gone and only Yeocomico survives.

As for back as 1838, Bishop Meade reported that he went to Yeocomico, preached and administered the rite of confirmation to three persons, adding that "Yeocomico Church, so called after the river of that name, is one of the old churches, being built in the year 1706. The architecture is rough but very strong and the materials must have been of the best kind. Its figure is that of a cross, and situated as it is in a little recess from the main road, in the midst of some aged trees, and surrounded by an old brick wall which is fast mouldering away, it can not fail to be an object of interest to one whose soul has any sympathy for such scenes."

[3] A handsome structure and well proportioned stands Old St Paul's; only a few miles from the Potomac and ten from the Rappahannock; venerable and interesting truly!

OLD ST. PAUL'S CHURCH

In King George County, Virginia, 1927
Built about 1766, perhaps earlier

A very deep human interest attaches to old St. Paul's Parish, which was set apart as such, more than fifty years before this church was built. For here, father and son, successively, were curates of the parish for well on towards eighty years. They bore the name of Stuart and we are told that David, the father, came to this country in 1715, from Scotland, and that he was directly descended from the royal house of Stuart. The son, William, succeeded to the parish about 1750 and it was during his time that old St. Paul's of to-day was erected.

This part of Virginia lies in the famed "Northern Neck," where, perhaps, a little touch of cultural pride existed. This house of worship, which was one of the best and most commodious of the cruciform churches in Virginia, was permitted to fall into ruins, except its well-built walls. In 1812 or 1813 it was visited by Bishop Meade and his words can best describe its pitiful state:

"St. Paul's was then in ruins. The roof was ready to fall; and not a window, door, pew, or timber remained below. Nevertheless, notice was given that we would preach there. A rude, temporary pulpit or stand was raised at one angle of the cross and from that we performed service and addressed the people. On the night before the meeting a heavy rain had fallen, and the water was in small pools here and there where the floor once was, so that it was difficult to find a dry spot on which the attendants might stand."

With County and Parish records gone the old Church alone re-
dates the life and traditions of past generations, and is there-
by especially consecrated an indelible landmark, a sacred
trust

OLD FORK CHURCH

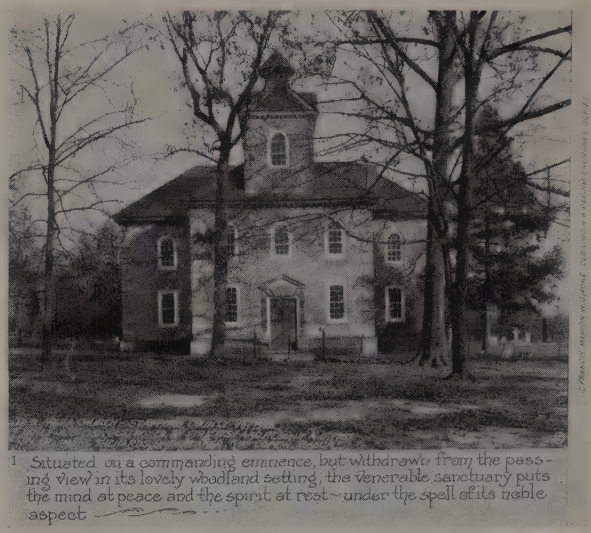
In Hanover County, Virginia, 1927
Built 1735

It is a rugged structure, seventy-five feet in length, its glazed-end bricks forming that woven-work pattern, of a peculiarly soft and mellow color tone. Over each door is a portico with columns of brick, proportioned and designed with a rare perception.

The old church is situated some twenty miles from Richmond, between that city and Fredericksburg, but four miles distant from what is now the main highway. In colonial times the parish churches were undoubtedly placed where it was deemed they would best serve as a gathering place for all the parishioners, but so vast have been the changes and so quickly do they sometimes come that what was then a central point for the parish may now serve but a few.

The people of the parish called it Fork Church, for it lies between those two wandering forks of the Pamunkey River, called the North Anna and South Anna. Probably, however, the parish name of St. Martin, after St. Martin-in-the-Fields, London, was its rightful heritage.

Not far distant died that exalted hero of Revolutionary times, Gen. Thomas Nelson, jr., so rich in patriotic sacrifices but so poorly requited, and within the sacred precincts of the old churchyard rest hallowed memories of many families replete with historic association.


1 Situated on a commanding eminence, but withdrawn from the passing view in its lovely woodland setting, the venerable sanctuary puts the mind at peace and the spirit at rest—under the spell of its noble aspect

OLD AQUIA CHURCH

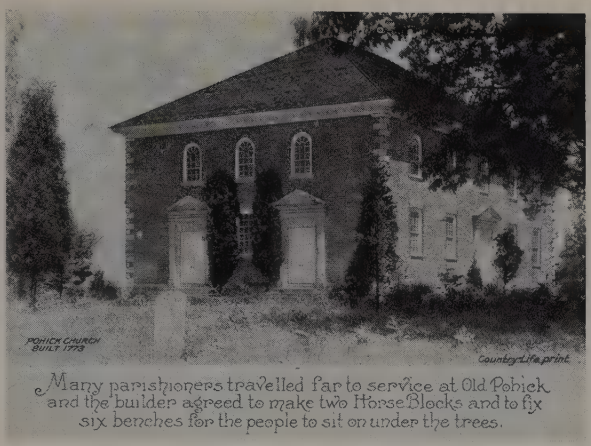
In Stafford County, Virginia, 1928

Built
A D 1751 Destroyed
By Fire 1751 & Rebuilt A D 1757
By Mourning Richards, Undertaker
William Copein, Mason

Over the old south doorway may still be seen the quaintly worded inscription, as written above. Thus, briefly, are we told of the tragedy of a fire having destroyed the first edifice; also that within a comparatively short space of time the present commodious structure took its place.

Old Aquia Church is in Overwharton Parish and Stafford County, both of which take their names from the corresponding ones in England. After this fashion are we constantly reminded, throughout the earlier Virginia settlements, of how the home ties pulled at the heart strings—for names, customs, and laws kept alive either the memory or the traditions of the homeland across the great water gap.

An early minister of the parish was the Rev. Alexander Scott. To him the parish is indebted for a handsome communion service of beaten silver, now in the possession of old Aquia Church. His successor was the Rev. John Moncure, descendant of a Huguenot refugee who fled from France at the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. During Mr. Moncure's rectorship of twenty-six years, the present church was built. It is one of the finest of Virginia's colonial-day churches, built of brick and ornamented with artful stonework. In shape it is cruciform and surmounted with a curious tower or observatory.



Many parishioners travelled far to service at Old Pohick and the builder agreed to make two Horse Blocks and to fix six benches for the people to sit on under the trees.

OLD POHICK CHURCH

In Truro Parish, Fairfax County, Virginia
Built 1773

Nov. 20, 1767: Resolution passed by Vestry to build this Church.

April 7, 1769: Date of Articles of Agreement between the Vestry and Daniel French, Gent. to build this Church.

Sept. 21, 1769: The "spott" to fix the Church upon was chosen.

Feb'y. 15, 1774: The Church building tendered to and accepted by the Vestry.

Old Pohick Church may truly be called the home church of Mount Vernon, for George Washington was a vestryman of Truro Parish, in which Pohick Church still stands, for a period of twenty-two years, from 1762 to 1784, and was three times elected a church warden. Augustine Washington, his father, was a vestryman of Truro Parish from 1735 to 1737.

George Washington was on two building committees for the parish, viz, for old Payne's Church (now gone) and for Pohick Church. On November 20, 1772, was sold by order of the vestry, a large square pew "No. twenty-eight, one of the Center pews adjoining the north Isle and next to the Communion Table, to Colo. George Washington at the price of sixteen pounds." This and other pews were sold at the same time to the highest bidders, at six months' credit and proper bonds taken for the purchase money. Legal deeds for these pews were executed and recorded in full in the records of the Clerk's Office of Fairfax County.

Old Pohick has done lonely sentinel duty through more than 150 winters, withstanding the ravages of storm and decay and remaining a monument to the determination of our forefathers to establish a well ordered life in the New World

OLD POHICK CHURCH

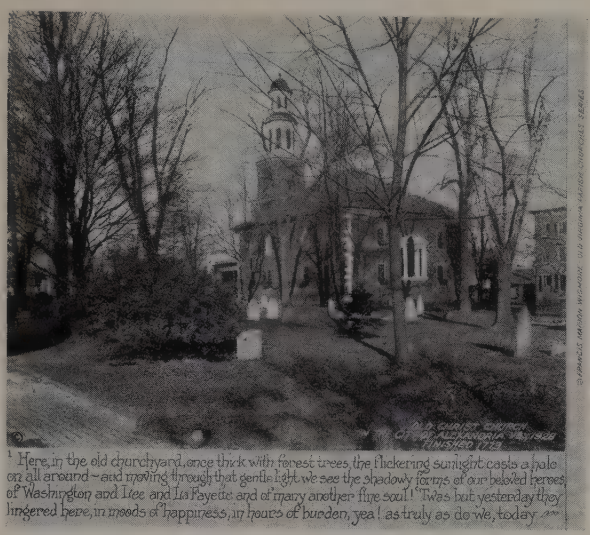
In Truro Parish, Fairfax County, Virginia
Built 1773

Pohick was one of the last churches to be built during the union of church and state. Under this union the vestry was composed of twelve of " the most able and discreet persons " in the parish and divided with the county court the responsibility of local government. It had jurisdiction over all the churches in its parish.

The old vestry book of Truro Parish, dating back to 1732, is the authentic record of its parochial administration and government. Lost sight of for three-quarters of a century, its whereabouts were discovered by the Rev. Philip Slaughter, acquired by him, and committed to the vestry of Pohick Church. A unique and priceless record saved from the fate of most similar records of the times; for this alone its savior deserves a conspicuous and loving tribute, and the more so for his further enrichment of our knowledge by many historical contributions!

A glance at the geographic positions of Old Pohick and the Old Church Tower at Jamestown acquaints the eye with exactly what their stories tell the mind, which is that they represent the beginning and the end, respectively, of that era of our country's history called the colonial-day period.

The first colonists landed at Jamestown, and as conditions permitted, projected themselves north and west along the banks of the Chesapeake and those great waterways, the James, York, Rappahannock, and Potomac Rivers, which stretch back to the blue mountains and pour out their eternal contributions to the " Mother of Waters," as the Indians so prettily called the Chesapeake Bay.


[1] Here, in the old churchyard, once thick with forest trees, the flickering sunlight casts a pale
on all around – and moving through that gentle light we see the shadowy forms of our beloved heroes,
of Washington and Lee and La Fayette and of many another fine soul! 'Twas but yesterday they
lingered here, in moods of happiness, in hours of burden, yea! as truly as do we, today.

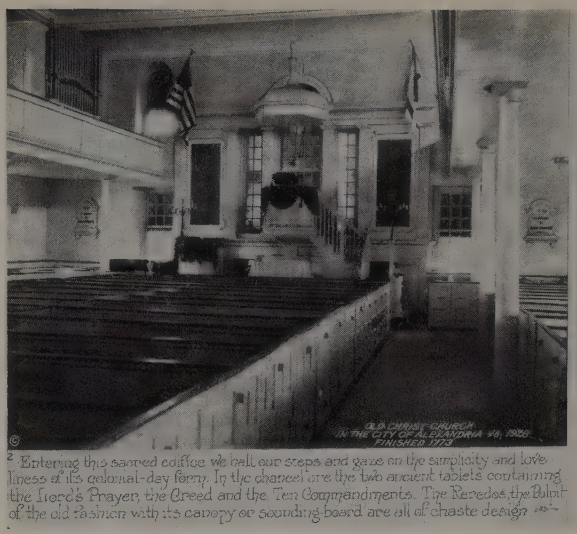
OLD CHRIST CHURCH

In the city of Alexandria, Virginia, 1928
Finished 1773

Old Christ Church, formerly in Truro, is now in Fairfax Parish, named in honor of Thomas, Lord Fairfax, Baron of Cameron. Washington purchased a pew immediately the church was completed, though still a vestryman of Truro Parish and owning a pew in Old Pohick. After the Revolutionary War, when voluntary support instead of support by taxation came into vogue, General Washington and others agreed that their pews in Christ Church should be forever charged with an annual rental of five pounds sterling. Another "man of history" worshipped here, and, as Col. Robert Lee, in 1853, he was confirmed in Old Christ Church—a man who, in the Lost Cause, suffered his defeat sublimely.

Christ Church holds a deep and abiding interest for all the people. Like Old Pohick, it, too, was one of the last churches to be built whilst state and church were politically in union. These old Church of England edifices of colonial days were built by the people of the Virginia colony as naturally as they builded the courthouses. With them this was an inherited and traditional form of religion.

Here, also, was the source for supplying to the people those necessary and well-ordered formulas and ceremonies at the time of baptism, marriage, and death. These things were of great necessity and comfort in a new country and made incalculably for its order and well-being. No bishop was stationed in Virginia, however, and ministers must either come from England after being ordained there, or proceed to England from Virginia to receive ordination and then return again.



Entering this sacred edifice we halt our steps and gaze on the simplicity and loveliness of its colonial-day form. In the chancel are the two ancient tablets containing the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the Ten Commandments. The Reredos, the Pulpit of the old fashion with its canopy or sounding board are all of chaste design

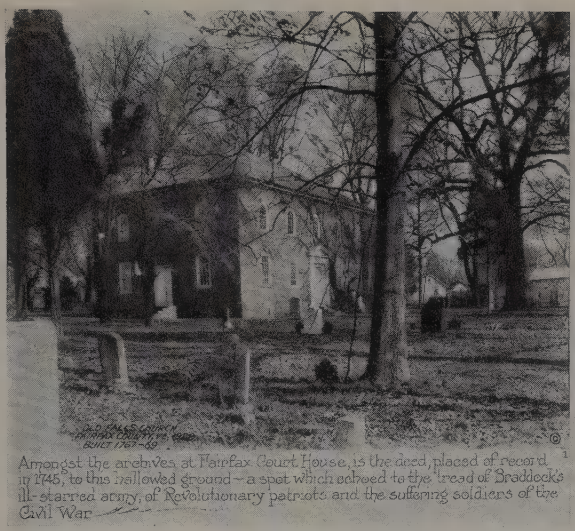
OLD CHRIST CHURCH

In the city of Alexandria, Virginia, 1928
Finished 1773

January, 1767: James Parsons agreed to build the church for £600. Parsons failed to complete the work.
1772: Vestry arranged with Col. John Carlyle to finish it for £220 additional.
Feb'y 27, 1773: Church delivered over to Vestry and pronounced completed in a workmanlike manner.
The architect was one James Wren, gentleman.

One of the most striking attributes of the interior of this revered church is the altar piece. Oriented, as was the Church's universal custom, the eastern sun sends a flood of warmth and cheer through the window openings, so gracefully modeled, and framed in by their setting of hand-tooled woodwork.

On the two delicately gilded panels, placed where all men might read, were set down, and still remain, the words of that supremely beautiful appeal, called Our Lord's Prayer. Here also are the unequivocal words of the churchman's faith, called The Creed; and those comprehensive Ten Commands from the twentieth chapter of Exodus. In addition to these, and not usually found in the churches of the day, is set forth that immutable guide to the conduct of all mankind, the Golden Rule: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them; for this is the law and the prophets."


Amongst the archives at Fairfax Court House, is the deed, placed of record in 1745, to this hallowed ground—a spot which echoed to the tread of Braddock's ill-starred army, of Revolutionary patriots and the suffering soldiers of the Civil War

OLD FALLS CHURCH

In Falls Church, Virginia, 1928
Built 1767–1769

Falls Church takes its name from the Little Falls of the Potomac River, five miles distant. In late colonial days two main arteries of travel intersected at Falls Church, the one to and from the ferry below the falls and the other from Hunting Creek, or Alexandria region.

On June 9, 1733, Mr. Richard Blackburn agreed with the vestry of Truro Parish to build a church at the crossroads near Michael Reagan's. It was to be of wood, 40 feet long and 22 feet wide, the inside work to be done in like manner to the work upon Pohick Church (not the present Pohick but an earlier building). Cost to be 33,500 pounds of tobacco.

Here was the genesis of Falls Church, though this building was known as the " Upper Church " until 1757. To it an addition was undertaken in 1750. Later, in 1763, the vestrymen met to examine it, and finding it rotten and unfit for repair, resolved to build a brick church at the same place.

Among those present at this decisive meeting was the recently elected member, George Washington, now thirty-one years of age. As illustrative of a custom, we set down from the records of the county court of Fairfax, February 15, 1763, the following: " George Washington, Esqr., took the oaths according to Law, repeated and subscribed the Test, and subscribed to the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church of England in order to qualify him to act as a Vestryman of Truro Parish."

Soon the new parish of Fairfax was created. It included Falls Church. Standing to-day is the brick church, built by Fairfax vestry, but " resolved " upon by Truro vestry!

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AUTHOR'S NOTES

The illustration on page IX is from a photograph of the painting of Bruton Parish Church by Mr. Wordsworth Thompson, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The illustration on page V is from an old cut of Pohick Church.

The illustration on page VII is from a photograph of Mr. H. A. Ogden's painting, depicting an historical anecdote of the Revolution.

The illustration on page 46 is a reproduction of the painting of George Washington at forty, by Charles Willson Peale.

The following books are invaluable in any study of the history of old Virginia Parish Churches, and their aid has been invoked in the present studies. They are:

Colonial Churches. Richmond, Va., Southern Churchman Co.

Goodwin, W. A. R. (1869–)
Bruton parish restored and its historic environments.
Petersburg, Va. Franklin Press Co., 1907.

Harrison, Fairfax (1869–)
Landmarks of old Prince William: A study of origins in northern Virginia.
Richmond, The Old Dominion Press, 1924. 2 vols.

Meade, William, Bishop (1789–1862)
Old Churches, ministers and families of Virginia.
Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1878. 2 vols.

Slaughter, Philip (1808–1890)
The history of Truro Parish in Virginia.
Philadelphia, G. W. Jacobs & Co., 1908.

Yonge, Samuel H.
The site of old "James Towne," 1607–1698.
Richmond, Va., The Hermitage Press, 1907.

Other books, church and court records, magazine and periodical articles may also be called upon for their quota of information.

"Washington at forty—in the year 1772—when the black thunder-clouds of war were gathering. A vestryman and on the Building Committee for Pohick Church"

The original of this portrait of George Washington, known as the "Colonial" or "Virginia Colonel" portrait, was painted by Charles Willson Peale, of Maryland. It was done in 1772, at Mount Vernon. The picture exhibited here is a photographic reproduction of the original, which now hangs in the Lee Memorial Chapel of Washington and Lee University at Lexington, Va.

> I never knew so constant an attendant at church as Washington. And his behavior in the house of God was ever so deeply reverential that it produced the happiest effect on my congregation, and greatly assisted me in my pulpit labors.

This is the testimony of his pastor and friend, the Rev. Lee Massey, minister of Truro Parish and Pohick Church.

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